

Chapter 5 Australia's Study of Japan in the 1990s and Beyond

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Chapter 5

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5.1 Growth Continues

At the time of the *Tsunami*, many people outside Japanese studies predicted that the growth in the number of Japanese learners in Australia would not continue. They argued this on two grounds: first, the growing interests in other Asian studies will take students away from Japanese studies; and second, the downturn of the Japanese economy would make a negative impact on the interest of potential students. The actual trend, however, ran counter to these predictions.

According to the figures gathered by the Japan Foundation, the Japanese learning population in Australia increased by five hundred percent (500%) between 1990 and 1998. At the end of the century, Australia recorded over three hundred and seven thousand (307,000) people learning Japanese. Further growth has occurred since then and the figure in 2001 was estimated at over four hundred and thirty thousand (430,000)*. This figure meant that approximately one out of forty four (44) Australians was learning Japanese, a staggering ratio by any standard.

* For the sources of this figure, refer to the Endnote 1.

Table 5: Increase in the Number of Japanese Learners in Australia in the 1990s¹⁹

	1990	1993	1998
Tertiary Level	6,387	9,697	9,593
Pre-tertiary Level	55,091	161,185	296,170
Others	545	8,359	1,997
Total	62,023	179,241	307,760

Note: Some of the data presented in Table 4 is repeated here.

As Table 5 shows, the most impressive growth occurred at the pre-tertiary level. In fact, Kakazu reported that in 1998, approximately one hundred